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Packrite: North America’s Trade Finishing Resource

by Nick Griffin

It’s natural to like people who help us succeed in business. That’s probably the best reason to explain why Mary and Michael Drummond have so many friends. As the power couple behind High Point, North Carolina’s Packrite, LLC, the Drummonds provide trade finishing resources to hundreds of folding carton and corrugated facilities throughout North America.

Packrite was started to make microflute packaging, but the Drummonds soon discovered that the industry had a wide array of needs that weren’t being met. “At first we didn’t understand just how underserved the market was,” says Michael, President and COO. “We soon realized that most companies didn’t have the technology Bobst supplies to produce truly flat sheets, or to get the print-to-cut precision that high-end packaging demands. Or to accomplish very complex folding tasks in a single pass as efficiently as possible.”

A large measure of Packrite’s business is turnkey, soup-to-nuts production, managing every aspect from sourcing the pre-print sheets through to the bundling of the finished product. Customers fall into four basic categories: folding carton companies with projects that

need the strength of corrugated, corrugated companies that want the high graphics of single-face lamination, fulfillment houses, and distribution organizations. “In total I guess that’s about half of our business,” Drummond reports.



Michael and Mary Drummond, owners of Packrite, LLC, have become a resource for helping other companies be more successful in what they do.

“A lot of what else we do is rounding out other companies to make them more successful at what they do. For many of our customers, we begin or complete jobs that they don’t have the capacity or equipment for,” he continues. “We started the company to fulfill a need for high graphic microflute packaging, but now, as a trade finisher, we do whatever our box

or carton maker customers can’t do on their own.” Sometimes, that’s everything and sometimes it’s the beginning, middle or end of the package’s production lifespan.

The owners of Packrite continually stress that they don’t compete with other companies for jobs. In fact they have a strict loyalty policy that turns away potential customers who want to compete for jobs already being done for other Packrite customers. “It’s a business model based on being a valued supplier who helps other companies do their best work and never

works against them with a competitor,” states Mary, who is CEO. “Once a customer brings a job to Packrite, we live and die by that customer. And the knowledge that we will never be in competition with them makes them more comfortable and us more dependable.”

Another way to look at Packrite is that its specialty is solving problems that others bring them. “Most corrugated companies on occasion use other corrugated companies to help with the projects they can’t handle,” Michael says. “What we do is different, because our expertise is utilizing world-class technology to meet the needs of our customers and help them open new markets for themselves and, by extension, for us. There are only a few companies anywhere that can compete with our capabilities and fewer still who open themselves up to outsiders as a trade finisher.”

Packrite’s focus can also be seen as collaborating with customers to meet their needs. “People come to us because they need a project finished out,” Michael states. “Maybe they need a microflute package to go with a paperboard component. Maybe it’s a high graphic piece to go with their brown box. That’s what we do, we round out other companies’ capabilities to make them more successful at what they do. We believe that we continually prove the value of single-face lamination, and especially microflute singleface lamination because with just three sheets instead of four we have no cracking and much better print-to-cut effectiveness while maintaining comparable strength.”

Production Firepower

“We began in 2008 by investing in the most state-of-the-art equipment on the market,” Michael explains. “We invested heavily in Bobst equipment and we worked to make sure that their trust in us was repaid. We bought an Asitrade, a 145 Expertcut diecutter — the first one sold in the world, and a Masterfold 130-inch folder-gluer. In 2012, we were the first North American installation of a Masterfold 170-inch with the Gyrobox blank rotation feature. It also has a



Packrite manages every aspect of the business, from sourcing pre-print sheets to the bundling of the finished product.



Packrite was the first North American installation of a Masterfold 170-inch with the Gyrobox blank rotation feature.

Streampack for the end of that line. Most recently we brought in a Mastercut 2.1 corrugated diecutter. We believe that all of this adds up to the best combination of manufacturing processes possible.”

The new Masterfold 170 gives Packrite the ability to make formerly impossible tasks work and work well. “Whether you’re using folding carton or corrugated, there is no other gluer that can compete with it. The Gyrobox feature allows for a wide array of possible gluing configurations. By having the Gyro rotator, we can glue in one direction and then spin the piece around and glue in another direction,” Michael explains. “For example, that affords us the luxury of putting plastic or paper handles on boxes with cold set glue at full machine speed, which is something we could never do before. The Gyro gives us the ability to make boxes that are simply not possible on any other gluer and it can do jobs in a single pass that otherwise would require at least two passes.”

The Bobst folder-gluer is robust and configurable enough to handle both paperboard and corrugated, allowing Packrite the flexibility to do more kinds of work on a single machine. “We’re able to treat corrugated like it’s paperboard, and paperboard like it’s corrugated. We blend the two, and that lets us make our packaging special for the customer and work better for their consumer.”

As the newest tool in Packrite’s arsenal, the Mastercut 2.1 has become another crucial part of the company’s operation and a differentiation point in the market. As Michael explains, “The 2.1 is a 51-inch by 83-inch diecutter with a print-to-cut precision better than a 1/64 of an inch. A feature called Power Register makes that possible because each sheet is perfectly aligned and positioned as it enters the diecutting section. In corrugated 1/4 of an inch of print-to-cut is considered acceptable. At a 1/64 print-to-cut accuracy, we are doing things every day that make it easy to sell into the industry and delight our customers.”

Doubling Throughput

This full complement of finishing equipment has succeeded in Packrite's original intention of fully utilizing its Asitrade. Especially with its production of up to 64-inch x 65-inch sheets, the Mastercut 2.1's ability to handle larger sheets is an ideal match.

"With the bigger footprint of the 2.1, we can now get over 50 percent more output in the same amount of time than we were with our smaller Expertcut," Michael says. "Our throughput more than doubled because jobs with large blanks that were being run one-up before on our Expertcut are now running two-up in the die configuration." This allows Packrite to complete jobs far faster, as well as with greater precision.

Packrite's new diecutter also has a fully automated Loader that automatically pre-feeds board into the machine, easily keeping up with its over 7,000 sheets per hour speed. "The loader is able to handle anything we throw at it — B- and C-flute as well our normal E- and N-microflutes. And it operates automatically so, for the most part, it feeds without much human intervention at all," Michael explains. "The lift truck driver puts pallets on the conveyor in front of it and from there the loader does the rest."

Additionally, the Mastercut 2.1 provides the option to run as a manual system, allowing for even more control. "Going manual allows us to fully nest, and by nesting, we can get the most out of the sheet. A normal rotary diecutter is harder to take apart, and therefore harder to use for nesting, but the 2.1 adds that option to our repertoire. The way we have it set up, we've gotten the best of both worlds: the ability to nest the corrugated, and the fastest speeds for the job." The combination of these capabilities makes the Mastercut 2.1 the diecutter of choice for



The Gyrobox on the Masterfold 170 enables it to glue in one direction then rotate the blank to be glued in another.



Operator controls on the Mastercut are user-friendly and efficient.



Packrite's newest addition is the Mastercut 2.1 diecutter.

the work that Packrite does. "We gained efficiencies that are second to none," Michael says, "and the savings helps us amortize the machine more quickly, and pass

some of these savings on to the customer.

"That's really what being a successful trade finisher is all about," he clarifies. "By being smarter and faster we're able to offer better pricing to our customers which makes them more competitive. It's really a win-win for all of us."

Rapid Growth

Packrite is currently growing at a rate of nearly 50 percent year over year — a remarkable feat for a company founded just as the recession of 2008 hit. Michael attributes this success to the technology in which the company has invested,

allowing it to serve a niche market with its highly sought-after capabilities. Two years ago, the company added a second shift to accommodate its growing volume of business and Packrite is now considering going to a third shift. "Because of the equipment we have," Mary explains, "we anticipate being able to continue growing extremely fast for the next two or three years, without any additional capital investment. And, with the firepower we've put on the floor in general, we expect to be in great shape for a number of years to come."

Michael summarizes his company's success succinctly: "People come to Packrite because we have technology other companies haven't even dreamed of yet. It doesn't matter whether the box or carton maker is a mom and pop shop or one of the big boys, they all come to us because we have a unique offering of knowledge and technology that is second to none in the industry."

See a brief video about Packrite and their Bobst Mastercut 2.1 at <http://youtu.be/FIOfjuJN1N8> or by going to YouTube's Packrite channel.